



# THE GAUCHO COMMUNICATOR

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## Issue 18 Contributors



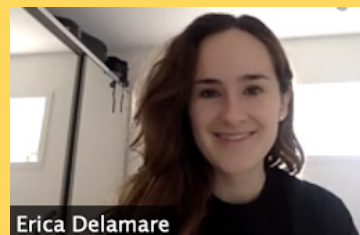
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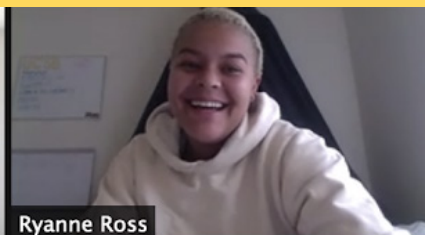
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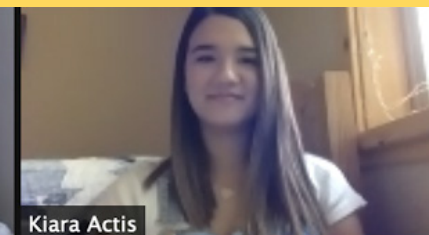
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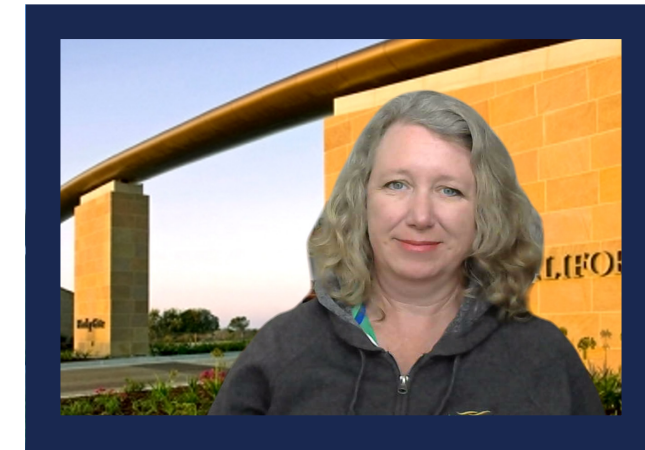
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## Update from the Department Chair

The 2019-20 school year has not exactly gone as planned. Normally, our spring quarter would have had many events like Career Day with our Alumni, our Department awards ceremony, and a fantastic graduation brunch on the balcony of SSMS for hundreds of graduating students and their families. Now, we are tired of zoom meetings, Gauchospace posts, and virtual-anything. Spring quarter feels like we are ending with a whimper instead of a bang. But, I could not be more proud of how our students, faculty, and staff have stepped up to the challenge. With less than a week's notice, the faculty re-thought their entire pedagogy and how it could work in a virtual classroom. The staff moved their offices to their homes and made themselves available to the faculty and students even more than before. The students found ways to motivate themselves to continue their studies even as they were isolated from their friends and campus support network. The future is uncertain but when we needed to step up to meet an important challenge, the Communication Department did so with enthusiasm and empathy. I am proud to be your Chair and look forward to working with all of you for the coming year on the new challenges we will face together.

Norah Dunbar, Department Chair



Department of Communication, UCSB

## Faculty Spotlight:

# Professor Dan Lane



### Who is Professor Lane?

"I grew up in a cloudy college town called Ithaca in upstate New York. As a teenager I played in (mostly bad) bands and helped build a recording studio in the basement of a local youth center. I loved the process of working with my friends to make something new that hadn't existed before. That love led me to study Television, Radio, and Film at Syracuse University.

After graduating I moved to Brooklyn, where I worked on (mostly bad) reality TV shows and independent films before starting my own company: Good Eye Video, which produced digital storytelling for non-profits and social causes. It was an amazing experience that took me all over the world creating videos for different organizations. As with music, I loved telling stories of people trying to change the world in various ways.... but I eventually started wondering if the work we were doing was having the kind of impact we wanted it to have. This led me to grad school at the University of Michigan, where I got my Phd in Communication. Even though the things I make these days are mostly Powerpoint slides and research papers, I still really enjoy the process of collaborating, learning, and thinking about questions that I think are important."

### What brought you to UC Santa Barbara?/ What made you choose UC Santa Barbara?

"I was honored to have the chance to work here alongside so many brilliant faculty, many of whom I'd been reading since I started grad school. The ocean and mountain views didn't hurt either."

### Which area in Communication have you found the most interesting to study?

"I'm really fascinated by how people and groups use communication to create political and social change. Specifically, I look at how social media can play a role in political engagement. My research usually falls at the intersection of political communication, intergroup communication and communication & technology."

### Is there a particular research project or topic you have worked on previously that you would like to highlight? If so, what was it about and what did you find?

"I'm really fond of a study I did a few years ago about how college students used the anonymous, geo-bounded app Yik Yak to talk about politics during the 2016 election. If you've heard of Yik Yak it's probably as a platform for bullying or other not so great stuff... but we actually found that Yik Yak was a very interesting space that young people used to explore and express their political selves with their peers. It wasn't a positive experience for all users, but some users actually viewed Yik Yak as a key space for experimenting with political expression."

### What is one topic you hope to research in the future?

"Currently, I run the Digital Political Inequality Lab, where we examine whether/how technologies like social media affect political inequalities between individuals and groups. I'm really excited about a range of projects that I'm working on with the graduate and undergraduate members of the lab."

### What is something you would tell your past self, knowing what you know today?

"Unlike many academics, I had lots of other jobs before I started down the path to becoming a teacher and researcher. I've had jobs or projects that were super disappointing or felt like failures... but I really did learn something valuable from each. I would tell my past self to be patient and put my whole heart into any opportunity that comes my way (no matter how boring or unenjoyable it seems). I'd also urge my past self (and my current students) to be guided by the things that deeply engage them. I once saw the author George Saunders speak and he said, "[W]e don't get to choose what we are good at." I think that's totally true... but we do in some sense get to choose the things we care about. Trying to find something that you're both good at and that you care about is a big challenge and may take time, but it's something truly worth working toward."

# SCHOOL IN PLACE

## How Comm professors and students are adjusting to online learning schedules

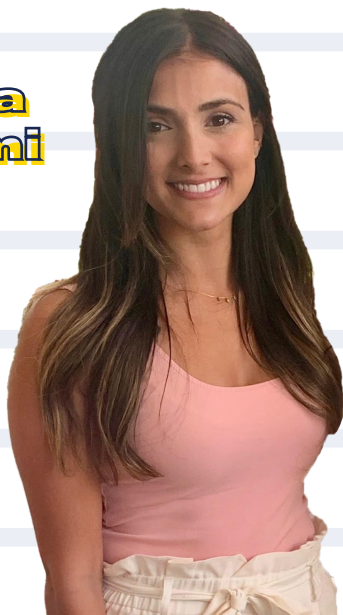
Wake up	9	
Have a cup of coffee on my backyard patio	10	
Go for a jog/run (not everyday!)	11	Wake up Post on Transfer Student Alliance (TSA) Instagram Get ready for the day
Have late breakfast	12	Eat breakfast Work on American Marketing Assoc project Watch pre-recorded comm lecture
Work on school work (lectures, homework, etc)	1	
	2	Pack things & drive to dad's house from mom's
	3	Go grocery shopping Attend live comm lecture
Take a break usually by having a snack & listening to music, audiobook, & briefly check social media	4	
Do household chores like unload dishwasher, do laundry, etc.	5	Hold office hours & eat a snack
	6	Post again on TSA feed & story TSA meeting
Dinner with family	7	Lambda Pi Eta Grad Panel meeting
Read, Netflix, zoom with friends/family	8	Make & eat dinner
	9	Watch "The Bachelor"
	10	
	11	Shower & get ready for bed
	12	Apply to jobs on LinkedIn Schedule week ahead
	1	
	2	Hit the hay

Get up & take a shower/get ready	7	Wake up, shower, get dressed, make coffee, check calendar, to-dos
Make hot green tea & take out the dogs	8	Live lecture online on Zoom
Zoom meeting with my grant partners	9	
Zoom meeting with one of my graduate students	9	
Talk with my teenage girls & play with the dogs	10	Live office hours on Zoom
Take a walk with the dogs & one of my daughters	11	
Prepare lunch for my girls & I	12	Eat lunch
Zoom meeting for graduate council	1	Live lecture online on Zoom
	2	Live meeting with my TAs on Zoom
Prepare Zoom lectures for my two undergraduate courses	3	Prepare assignments, quizzes, lessons
	4	Get out of the house & bike! Maintain sanity!!
Prepare dinner	5	Prepare dinner for the family (& listen to music, audiobooks, or podcasts)
Go for another walk with the entire family	6	Eat dinner
Hang out with the family	7	Record asynchronous lessons & post them on GauchoSpace, organize files
Watch television shows with my girls	8	
	9	Watch TV (current roster: "Mrs. America", "Lost"), maybe have a drink?
	10	
	11	Get ready for bed
	12	Zonked out & Zzzzzz
	1	
	2	

PROFESSORS

PROFESSORS

**Mina Azimi**



**Kayla Lucia**



**Dr. Tammy Afifi**



**Dr. Ziad Matni**



By **Erica Delamare**

# Senior Thesis Spotlight

## Haley Mehlman

### Thesis Topic:

The Influence of Gender and Videos on Moral Judgements

### What is your research centered around?

“My thesis is about moral foundations, media effects, and gender differences. I am researching whether viewing videos on popular sites, such as YouTube, can shift moral foundations by making certain domains more salient than others. I am also analyzing if there are gender effects in how people form moral judgments, how they rate the moral digressions of males versus females, and how the media influences moral domains in men versus women. Finally, I am looking at if there is a relationship between sexual strategies and the moral domain of care/harm.”



### Why did you choose this particular topic to study?

“I chose my topic after being a research assistant in Professor Weber's Media Neuroscience Lab. The lab does a lot of research on media and morality and I found it really interesting so I wanted to pursue a similar area for my thesis project.”

### What is something you learned from your research?

“The biggest thing I learned is how hard data is to analyze. I thought once I collected data I would be able to instantly run my statistical tests and yield results. It turns out that it is a much longer process – just getting my data clean and ready to analyze was a major project of its own. My other greatest takeaway was how supportive the Communication Department is here at UCSB. All the faculty members and graduate students who helped me were very friendly, approachable, and knowledgeable. They were invaluable and I would not have been able to complete my project without them.”

**“My name is Haley and I am a Communication and Psychological and Brain Sciences double major from Walnut Creek, California!”**

A peek into the research work of our graduating seniors: examining morality with Mehlman & communication platforms with Pressman

## Jessica Pressman

### Thesis Topic:

The relational investment of various computer mediated communication platforms used to connect with those who have matched on mobile dating applications.

### What is your research centered around?

“I am interested in studying the levels of commitment associated with different forms of computer mediated communication such as texting, snapchatting, face-timing, sliding into someone's instagram dm's, etc. I am looking at users' motivations for downloading dating apps, as well as how they proceed to communicate with their matches outside of the app. I am also investigating privacy concerns and media multiplexity.”

### Why did you choose this particular topic to study?

“My initial interest came from the idea that giving someone your Snapchat username could be more indicative of wanting to hook-up rather than sharing a phone number. Likewise, giving a phone number to someone you've met on Tinder might be associated with more commitment and be indicative of intentions to form a relationship. I have always been interested in interpersonal and mediated communication, and I knew that it would be easy to collect data on dating apps because they are so popular in today's society, especially among college students.”



**“My name is Jessica and I am from Maui, Hawaii. In my free time I love going to the beach with my friends or lying in my hammock and listening to music!”**

### What is something you learned from your research?

“Something that my honor's thesis has taught me is how to interview people. While collecting qualitative data, I had to call several strangers and ask them personal questions about their dating history. While this task was daunting at first, I feel like my own communication skills have improved and I am more comfortable talking on the phone.”

### How has the COVID-19 situation affected your project and research?

“Due to COVID-19, I decided to change the in-person interviews to phone interviews. Luckily, this was a simple solution and the rest of my work has been unaffected. I am currently in the process of analyzing my data and writing up my results.”

# Advice from Graduating Seniors to Pre-Comm Students

We asked a handful of graduating seniors in the Communication major to tell us their key tips for success. Their answers provide insight for those gearing up to take upper-division courses.

This article features responses from Erin Son (ES), Shriya Ghai (SG), and Noah Cohen (NC). Pictured in that order.

## What has been your favorite upper-division Communication course you have taken at UCSB, and why?

**ES:** "My favorite upper-division Communication course has to be Comm 150: Group Communication in Multiple Contexts. Gordon Abra teaches this class, and it's my favorite because the way he teaches is so unique. He doesn't use any PowerPoint slides so you truly have to pay attention to take thorough notes. Each lecture leaves you thinking about the

world in a fresh new perspective. We often take the little things in life for granted and Abra makes sure that we appreciate them and are aware of our surroundings. This is an impressionable class that does not disappoint!"

**NC:** "Some of my favorite classes in the Communication Department at UCSB were Persuasion, Social Networks, Dark Side of Communication, among others. However, I believe the most important aspect for truly enjoying a class is to find professors that you enjoy, not only in demeanor, but in teaching style. If you can find a professor whose style fits your learning style and can keep your attention for the entire hour and fifteen minutes, then you will undoubtedly enjoy the class."

**SG:** "My favorite Communication class was Comm 108: Corporate Social Responsibility, which was taught by Dr. Stohl. I never knew a field of research such as CSR even existed and it was really fascinating to learn how different organizations and companies try to be sustainable and socially accountable. It definitely opened my eyes toward how (and which) companies are corrupt and how they manage to salvage their reputations. This class made me into a conscientious consumer and [I] learn[ed] how our voices as customers can be extremely powerful."

## What are your study tips for those who are trying to get into the major? What study tactics work best for you?

**ES:** "When it comes to Pre-Comm, the best way to study is with a buddy. It definitely takes more than just memorizing the theories and definitions. To get into the major, Pre-Comm students need to know the theories inside and out. My study tactic was going over the notes by myself first and then teaching a friend in the class about the theories. I take notes on my computer, so I print them out before an exam and highlight all over my study guide/notes as I am studying with a partner."

**NC:** "While you hear it often, make a study group with only one or two other individuals and TEACH one another. Large study groups can commonly become unfocused or centered around a few individuals. With a few focused individuals, it gives opportunities for everyone to speak and truly dive into the information."

**SG:** "I definitely recommend not procrastinating on readings. My go to strategy for every class is to divide the readings [into parts] and just read a little bit so I'm not overwhelmed by the time the midterm or final rolls around. It's much better to read five pages every day than read 100 pages the night before. Remember to take notes on the readings too, so you can just skim your notes instead of the entire article before the test. I always prefer to just review all the information the night before instead of learning anything new, just so I'm not stressed that it's too late to process the information. It gives me enough time to ask questions too!"



# Where Are They Now?

For this issue of The Gaucho Communicator we caught up with alumni Alijah, Anne, and Justine to gain insight on their career paths after college. Each has established themselves in their respective fields, whether reporting, marketing or business analysis. *The opinions held in this article are views held by the alumni and not reflections of their companies.*

**Anna Meyer** has always had a natural talent for writing and telling stories, listening and expressing; as a third-year transfer student, Anna was able to develop these skills learning about communication theory with the department. The biggest development Anna took away from her educational pursuit were her abilities as a strong writer, which she believes acted as a differentiator and success factor in future roles. After graduation Anna took a gap year in order to prepare herself for a graduate program. During the transition, Anna prepared herself by taking GRE preparation courses and gaining work experience through internships that were geared towards her career goals in public health and social work. The work landed her at the graduate school of her choice. In the summer before she completed the course, she participated in an internship at Centene Corporation, where she continues to work to this day. Anna advocates to current gauchos to try everything, stating that finding what you want to do is often a process of learning what you may not want to do, in order to become closer to the roles and areas that are the best fit for you. She emphasized that many people change their roles several times throughout their careers and that there is flexibility and time to

figure out what you want to do. Additionally, she recommends practicing interviewing, keeping a positive attitude, and reaching out to your network.

Currently Anna works as a business analyst for Centene Corporation, in her work she is able to utilize skills learned from her degree including crafting effective emails, business and academic writing, public speaking, and using graphics and design as a component of communicating effectively. Due to COVID work adjustments Anna has focused on maintaining her work-life balance in order to remain productive given the change of environment and set up, in addition to figuring out new ways to communicate and have effective meetings that keep work moving along at the same rate as before. Anna's hobbies outside of work include doing DIY projects, reading non-fiction, bike riding, learning about and practicing sustainable fashion, and trying out new food places or local businesses.



## What was the best advice you received in regards to a successful future/career?

**ES:** "The best advice I have gotten from one of my Comm TAs was that these grades do not define who you are. The pressure Pre-Comm students [face] is very stressful. Especially as a transfer student, I was also worried about not making it into the major and then not being able to graduate in the time I desired [to]. However, the support of the Communication faculty and staff were very helpful in transitioning from the Pre-Comm to the Communication major. All the Pre-Comm students are in the same boat as you, so just remember to ask for help and take a deep breath. It will be okay!"

**NC:** "The best advice I was given was to go over the information taught often but not so in depth. If you try and review every ounce of reading and information after every lecture, it is possible to become burnt out and lose a willingness to review. If you instead review your lecture notes for five minutes a few hours after the lecture, the

information will stick far more thoroughly."

**SG:** "The best advice I've gotten is from my dad. He always says to not be afraid to apply for jobs even if you think you are not qualified or if it doesn't align with your interests at first. There is an extreme variety of occupations out there and we shouldn't waste our chances by only sticking to one area."

## What advice do you wish you could have told your Pre-Comm self?

**ES:** "I wish I could have told my Pre-Comm self that it isn't the end of the world. This is one part of undergrad. The hard work will pay off no matter what. Everything you're learning now will also be

useful for your future. Don't stress yourself out too much, study hard, and the rest will follow. "

**NC:** "Get ahead of the class early and focus on staying ahead."

**SG:** "Not being afraid to go to professors'/TAs' office hours and asking them questions. They're there to help and won't find you annoying, I promise!"



**Justine Miller** is the cofounder of JetSet Journalist, a freelance international video journalism company, and a reporter for News 12, where she covers human interest stories. Justine enjoys the freedom of maintaining her own business as well as the perks of having more resources and unique opportunities that come from working with a station. While she doesn't directly utilize the communication skills she has learned for her journalism work, Justine finds that she uses communication theory to guide all of her interactions with others. Courses such as Conflict in Communication and Negotiation stand out to her. After graduation she embraced the journey of figuring out what career was meant for her. Initially Justine lived, worked and travelled abroad while teaching english in Thailand. Upon her return she set out to move to New York and was able to after landing an internship with an event planning company. From there Justine changed career aspirations away from event planning, after trying out various different jobs she shifted towards journalism. Because she didn't have a background in the field she set out to go back to school and obtain a master's degree. After completing her degree and a video production fellowship at the Charlotte Observer, Justine knew that she wanted to become an on camera news reporter. A month after declining a full-time video production offer, Justine got her position at News 12.

Justine advises graduating gauchos to keep a positive attitude, noting that applying for jobs can be really disheartening so it is important to preserve and not take it too personal. Continuing that something may



not work out perfectly at the moment but it could in the future, failure is inevitable but you will learn and grow from it. She recommends finding hands on internships and talking to everyone about what you want to do to start building connections and gaining

**Alijah Rivera** was drawn to Communication because of its sense of direction and abundance of opportunity. During undergrad, he served as a student leader committed to community building through the multicultural organization Kapatirang Pilipino and also worked at the UCSB Recreation Center where he supervised sports and special events. Through these experiences Alijah learned skills that would benefit his future work experience, including facilitating meetings, running events, and working under pressure. By starting his search early and proactively reaching out to his network, Alijah was fortunate enough to have a job lined up right after graduation.

Alijah now works at the media agency OMD USA as an associate manager on the Apple account. In his specialty, digital media, Alijah works to negotiate and create ad campaigns leveraging where and when ads make sense. The standards created by his team in the US market often become guidelines to campaigns created globally. Outside of work Alijah enjoys mentoring, dancing, and exercising his creative writing skills. Alijah would advise any gauchos reading to focus on perseverance, to be proactive in gathering information during your job search, including informational interviews and to reach out to your friends who are going through the same journey for moral support.



# get to know your TAs!

In order to familiarize themselves with their students, teaching assistants ("TAs") prepare icebreaker questions for students to answer on the first day of class or section. To get to know them better, we decided to have TAs name their own favorite icebreaker questions and answer them!



**NITZAN NAVICK**

**What's your favorite icebreaker?**

"I always like to ask my students super odd-ball questions because it always gets them to laugh and sets a tone for my classes that it's okay not to take everything so seriously! My favorite question is, 'What is your third favorite lizard?'"

**Their Answer:** "Mine is a salamander."



**ROSELIA MENDEZ MURILLO**

**What's your favorite icebreaker?**

"I ask my students to share a fun, unique fact about themselves. I emphasize the unique part. That is, it has to be really interesting. If [I] or the rest of the class think it's "lame" we won't hesitate to tell them so, and they have to share another fact. For example, speaking two languages, knowing how to play an instrument, or playing a sport are cool fun facts, but not unique enough. I've had students who have cooked for Beyonce, met Kanye and Kim on a plane, lived in every continent except Antarctica, had Amanda Bynes take away their phone to delete a picture taken of her, and many other countless stories."

**Their Answer:** "To date, 14 birds have pooped on me."





**NAN WILKENFELD**

**What's your favorite icebreaker?**

"I like to ask either:

1. If you could have any superpower what would it be, and how would you use it to help others?
2. What is one of your guilty pleasures?"

**Their Answer:**

1. "I'd like to be able to fly. I'd help save people if they were trapped or stuck, and I'd help transport urgent items like organs."
2. "Sappy romantic stories, especially on reality TV shows like **"Love is Blind"**... I watched the whole season, then started following the best couple on Instagram and YouTube... \*hides face in hands\*"

**Their Answer:**

Since Kevin's icebreaker doesn't require him to answer a question, we had him answer these three instead:

Q: What is your favorite TV show or book?

A: Sex and the City

Q: What is the top place on your travel bucket list?

A: Taiwan

Q: If you could go back to any moment in history where would you go?

A: "I'm a person of color, so I can't really go back in time that far...but, at the moment, I would probably go back in time before people started hoarding toilet paper due to COVID-19 so that I can experience life before the madness.



**KEVIN DO**

**What's your favorite icebreaker?**

"One of my favorite icebreakers is to have each student write three fun facts, their name, and email on a sheet of lined paper. Then, each student is told to crumple the paper up and throw it in the front of the room. Once all the paper is in the front of the room, I collect them in a basket and throw each crumpled-up paper back to a new random student. Then, students are asked to make a new friend by finding whoever's crumpled up paper they got. The last part of this icebreaker is my favorite part: I then ask students to share their three fun facts they wrote on the lined paper. The caveat is, I have to deem the fun fact to actually be fun; having a dog and eight brothers and sisters is not fun, but passing an exam after day drinking is definitely fun!"

# SB meets DC

**A Communication student's experience in the UCSB Washington Center Program (UCDC)**

As a second-year transfer student studying Communication, participating in UCDC helped me to grow both in my knowledge and application of the subject, and as a person. This program pushed me out of my comfort zone and was an experience I will always cherish.

I interned at Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, a record label affiliated with the Smithsonian Institute, specializing in folk, world, and children's music. The internship was incredible.

As a marketing intern, I received hands-on experience writing copy, publicizing tours, organizing community events, and putting together the 2019 press book for the label.

From listening to an array of music, such as Appalachian folk, Sub-Saharan African music, and Corsican choral children's songs, I learned how different cultures use music to communicate with their communities. The stories in these songs allowed for performers to preserve their culture's history, and share them with generations to come.

An added bonus to the internship was that the office was located just a few blocks from the Capitol, with rooftop views that overlooked that National Mall!

While having the 24-hour-a-week internship, I also enrolled in two courses. My personal favorite course, "Money, Message & Media," studied the history and components of presidential campaigns. The class instructor, who is a senior executive producer for C-SPAN, had different guests speak to our 12-person class each week. We conversed with campaign managers, a



Smithsonian Center





member of the Federal Election Committee, as well as journalists from Politico and The Washington Post who were covering the upcoming election. I learned how they communicate with the public, Congress members, federal employees, and even the president, to write their beats. The class also got a tour of C-SPAN, where we took turns sitting on the broadcasting set as we

pretended to report the nighttime news!

Internship and classes aside, I truly enjoyed getting to live in our nation's capital. Growing up in southern Orange County, the epitome of suburbia, it was surreal living a few blocks behind the White House. I loved the fast-paced lifestyle and taking the Metro to and from work. During lunch breaks, I would sometimes walk past the Capitol lawn and see senators and Congresspeople delivering passionate speeches - some of the same people I would ride with on the Metro.

The quarter flew by, not just because of the developments of the impeachment inquiry, but also because of the Nationals first win in the World Series. Members of the UCDC cohort and I would gather at bars, as well as behind the gate of Nationals Park during home games to root for the Nats. The city bursted with unbridled cheer the night the Nationals won. The excitement continued at the championship parade, where the baseball players weaved through historic landmarks of the city as red confetti filled the autumn air.



Getting into the D.C. spirit, I participated in multiple marches and protests, including the climate strike in September. It was a powerful experience to gather with people from around the country in front of the Capitol to express our voices. I even mustered the courage to lead a few chants myself!

I also participated in the UC Alumni Networking Program, where current UCDC students were mentored by UC alumni who presently work in D.C. One networking event I attended with UC alumni was in the NoMa District, which is home to many news networks. The event took place at a beer garden, so it was a funny moment seeing CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer at this event, as I had seen him several times on TV at home reporting the news. When in D.C., you really have no idea who you are going to run into.

As an intern for the Smithsonian Institute, I had security clearance for all of the Smithsonian museums. It also allowed me access to a private tour of the archives at the National Museum of American History, where an archivist showed me a wealth of artifacts from people I am inspired by. Some of these artifacts included a guitar Prince played on tour, some of Celia Cruz's eclectic wigs, Mr. Roger's red sweater, and the costume Lin Manuel Miranda wore in Hamilton. I was pretty excited to say the least.

I am forever grateful to have participated in the UCDC program and for the support from the UCSB Communication Department in navigating UCDC classes. I recommend this program to any Communication scholar looking to expand their Communication

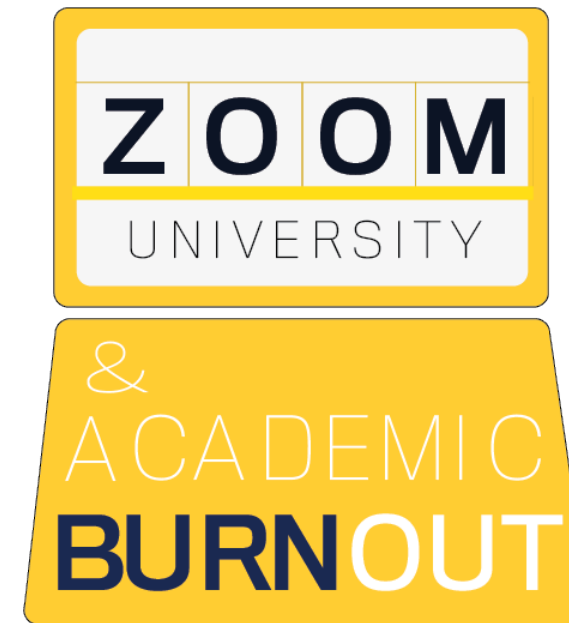


# Ready, Set, Go!

Need a little motivation to get through the day? Check out this playlist of motivational songs per the recommendations of Communication students, faculty, and professors. Enjoy!

- Move On Up (Single Edit) - Curtis Mayfield
- The London - Young Thug (feat. J. Cole & Travis Scott)
- Don't Start Now - Dua Lipa
- My Way - Ava Max
- 3am in Chicago - Brendan Bennett (feat. Eddy Rock)
- It Might Be Time - Tame Impala
- Mr. Blue Sky - Electric Light Orchestra
- Electric Love - BORNS
- New Light - John Mayer
- Look What God Gave Her - Thomas Rhett
- Sunday Morning - Maroon 5
- Wait - NoMBe
- Numb - Elderbrook
- Ready Set - Kash Doll (feat. Big Sean)
- Fly - D Smoke (feat. Davion Farris)
- Carry On - Kygo & Rita Ora
- Blinding Lights - The Weeknd
- Walk Like an Egyptian - The Bangles
- Under Pressure - Queen & David Bowie
- True Trans Soul Rebel - Against Me!
- Move Along - The All-American Rejects
- Puppy Grin - Peach Pit
- Just a Girl - No Doubt
- Tightrope - Janelle Monae (feat. Big Boi)
- Con Altura - ROSALIA & J Balvin (feat. El Guincho)

Scan this QR code in the search utility on Spotify to access the full playlist



## The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Educational Environments in the Virtual Sphere

**Academic burnout:** feelings of mental exhaustion and physical fatigue, stemming from chronic stress from one's academic responsibilities and environment. It is a phenomenon that affects many members of the college community, and it is now heavily exacerbated by the sudden and rapid transition from traditional, in-person schooling to fully online schooling. Previously contained within the bounds of a university's campus, academic burnout has become more pervasive and insidious. Its proliferation is further empowered by the flexible structure and environment of "Zoom University"—the affectionate nickname the student community uses when referring to online schooling or online courses, a reference to the fact that many courses now use the Zoom video conferencing program to host lectures.

In response to its adoption, Zoom University has been met with two distinct attitudes from students, of love or of hate. The abrupt, hasty

transition into the online format was less than ideal for both students and faculty alike, and the quarter system offers little time to grow accustomed to this new virtual academic environment. Particularly, the point of virtuality seems to have the greatest impact on whether students thrive or struggle with Zoom University. For some, the virtual nature of Zoom University is jarring and disorientating, severely disrupting students' established study habits and schedules and subsequently intensifying the academic stress students feel. For others, the lack of a physical classroom renders lectures and schoolwork as intangible and indeterminate, as suggestions rather than concrete assignments, leaving students mentally disconnected from their education. While this may lighten the pressure students feel, it negatively impacts work ethic and work quality—and this is not to say online classes make students lazy.

The online environment amplifies many of the

struggles students face in traditional classrooms. And absent the material resources of a traditional class and the support of their peers (the support may still exist through online means, but the difficulty in cultivating peer relationships and gathering study groups has certainly taken a toll), students are inadvertently set up to struggle. To put it bluntly, Zoom University was never, and still is not, prepared to provide students with the support needed to thrive as they would in the traditional university setting. This is at (little to) no fault of the colleges themselves; the novel culture and inherent structure of Zoom University is simply one that emphasizes completing assignments over true learning. Reading material, video lectures, and deadlines may populate a course page, but they lack the depth, the engagement, and the dynamicity of in-person lectures and the traditional classroom. There is something about physically existing in the academic space of your courses that pre-recorded video lectures and Zoom calls cannot replace or replicate. I am aware of the concern and argument that not all students did attend their physical, in-person lectures when given the chance—and this is a problem that Zoom University culture exacerbates rather than alleviates. With online lectures often recorded then later uploaded to course pages, in addition to having the day's slides posted, attendance for online lectures is abysmal compared to traditional attendance numbers. I do not doubt that most students are watching recorded video lectures on their own time, but this only further reduces the educational depth courses have: no real time questions asked and answered, no back-and-forth discussion of class material, clarification and concerns restricted to emails and the

occasional Zoom office hours, which are often an uncomfortable and now an oddly public ordeal in and of itself.

It would be a great disservice if I failed to mention the new affordances that Zoom University has allowed students to enjoy, and it would be a greater disservice to not mention the double-edged nature of these perceived benefits, especially in regards to whether they truly help or hinder the academic ability and performance of students. The flexibility in schedule is likely the most significant change from traditional schooling. Students are allowed and empowered to set their own schedules, with no rigid routine to follow, aside from perhaps a few regular Zoom lectures (given that most of these lectures are still later made available online). The lack of routine, however, not only blurs but also erases the line between academia and home life. Academic stress bleeds into all other aspects of life. With no physical or mental delineation between where students study and where students relax, it is much easier to be burdened and overwhelmed by the pressure of maintaining grades and keeping up with coursework. Perhaps it is entitled to complain about not being able to “relax” especially in the context of higher education. However, informed discussion about the lack of structure in Zoom University and its impact on student performance and mental health needs to be a topic further explored between educators, university administration, and students. Zoom University is, in many ways, a unique educational experience with its own unique difficulties and growing pains, and the conversation around it needs to better address the less visible struggles that affect the academic and overall university experience of students.

# Quality Quarantine: The Cool Down

In the midst of this historic pandemic, it is important to set aside some time for yourself each day to breathe and wind down. Here are five ways to find some peace and relaxation at home:

## Journaling

When you feel like your mind can't seem to take a break, writing down your thoughts is a great way to slow down. It can help categorize your restless thoughts and find some clarity with what may be on your mind. Sometimes it can be hard to begin writing how you feel - a great way to start is by describing your day or writing down what you are grateful for. A gratitude list is also a wonderful way to bring yourself some positivity and light.



## Bake

Fresh-out-of-the-oven chocolate chip cookies. Goopy fudge brownies. A warm batch of blueberry scones. What better time than now to treat yourself to something sweet! Whether you want to stick with the classics or be adventurous and bake something new (try olive oil cake or coconut macaroons), baking is a lovely way to make something for yourself to enjoy. And if baking isn't your forte, you can always take the shortcut with a baking mix from the store. Not sure what tasty treat to bake? Check out Pinterest to find a little inspiration and some fun recipes. Bon appetit!



## Draw & Paint

You don't have to be the next Kahlo or Picasso to do this decompressing exercise. Whether it be sketches, stick figures, water colors or drawing with pastels, grab some scratch paper and create your own work of art! If you prefer coloring, go ahead and print out coloring pages from the internet with an image that looks soothing to you. Put on some relaxing music and let your creativity flow.



## Gardening

Breathing in fresh air, feeling soil with your hands, tending to plants to make room for new flowers to grow ... Gardening is a great way to decompress and let your mind rest. If you don't have a garden or yard, consider growing plants that bloom easily indoors, such as basil or peperomia. You can also create a little indoor garden with succulents and airplants on a windowsill.



## Box Breathing

Don't worry, this exercise does not involve you breathing into a box! Box breathing is a technique that can help with calming down which you can do at any time. Here's how it works: First, exhale for four seconds. Second, hold your lungs empty for four seconds. Next, at the same pace, inhale through your nose to a count of four. Finally, hold the air in your lungs for four seconds before exhaling to start the breathing pattern again. When first trying it out, it may be helpful to practice it in a quiet space with your eyes closed to really focus on your breath.

